

PROHIBITING THE SALE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OF ROCKFISH WEIGHING MORE THAN 15 POUNDS

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Mr. PASTORE, from the Committee on the District of Columbia,  
submitted the following

## REPORT

[To accompany S. 41]

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the bill (S. 41) prohibiting the sale in the District of Columbia of rockfish weighing more than 15 pounds, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

The purpose of the bill is to conserve the species of striped bass known locally as rockfish in the Potomac River and also to make uniform a protective law within the District of Columbia for the conservation of this species in connection with similar conservation laws in the adjoining States.

The waters of Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are the natural home of the striped bass. Fish migrating from these waters are largely responsible for the presence of these fish from the Virginia Capes north to Maine. Chesapeake waters are controlled jointly by the States of Maryland and Virginia.

Maryland controls the waters of the Potomac River up to the high water line on Virginia's shores. Virginia claims jurisdiction over the waters of its creeks and bays from point to point on the Virginia shore line.

Maryland has a limit on poundage on the rockfish. No one is permitted to keep or sell a rockfish in Maryland more than 15 pounds in weight, and this law is more or less enforced, particularly in Maryland's markets.

Virginia has a limit of 25 pounds on rockfish, and fish of this size may be kept and sold in Virginia's markets.

The District of Columbia has no limit in poundage on these fish. It does have a minimum length limit of 11 inches on these fish sold in its markets. The result of these conflicting laws and lack of law

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is that both Maryland and Virginia commercial fishermen sell their oversize fish in the District of Columbia markets.

The Potomac River is one of the spawning grounds of the rockfish. Each spring, they school in vast numbers and come up the river on their annual spawning run. Commercial fishermen take them in vast quantities in the lower river, when the fish are spawn laden. Neither Maryland, Virginia, nor the District of Columbia have any law to prevent these spawn-laden fish being taken either by hook or line or commercially in nets.

The large rockfish, over 15 pounds in weight, are the big brood fish. They carry vast quantities of eggs. The maximum limits of both Maryland and Virginia are placed to protect these large spawn-laden brood fish. Furthermore, these large brood fish, while they have some market value, bring much lower prices in the market than the smaller fish which most people buy for table use. However, with a market like the District of Columbia, both Maryland and Virginia commercial fishermen dump these big brood fish on our local markets. Marylanders cannot sell fish over 15 pounds in Maryland, and Virginians, fish of more than 25 pounds in Virginia, yet both sell fish ranging upward of 40 pounds in the District of Columbia.

The bill was favorably reported by a unanimous vote of the committee.

### CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with subsection (4) of rule XXIX of the Standing Rules of the Senate, changes in existing law in the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in *italic*, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

#### 31 STAT. 1336, CH. 854

SEC. 899. [Small Fish] *Striped Bass*.—It shall be unlawful for any person to *offer for sale*, to expose for sale, or to *sell*, in the District of Columbia, at any time during the year, any striped bass, *locally called rockfish* [or rockfish or black bass having a length of less than nine inches], which is less than twelve inches in length (measured from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail), or more than fifteen pounds in weight.

